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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EU](#) [CH](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: PRC/France: SEGOLENE ROYAL VISITS BEIJING

Classified By: Political Section External Unit Chief Edgard Kagan. Reasons 1/4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Segolene Royal, the head of the French Socialist Party who hopes to become France's first female President in elections in April and May, had a positive visit to China, according to French Embassy Political Counselor Erkki Maillard. During her four-day trip to Beijing ending of January 9, Royal met Vice President Zeng Qinghong, State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan, head of the Communist Party's International Department Wang Jiarui, Minister of Commerce Bo Xilai and Executive Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo. A meeting with Hu Jintao was requested but did not take place, according to Maillard who commented French conservatives ridiculed Royal in the media for failing to get high-level meetings. In her meeting with VP Zeng Qinghong, who is also a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, the two agreed to strengthen dialogue and exchanges between the Socialist and Communist parties, said Maillard. In addition to meetings with government officials, Royal also made high-profile visits to the Great Wall and Forbidden City, spoke with a group of students and met with a "typical" Chinese family.

¶2. (C) Because Royal's trip to Beijing was not "official" the French Embassy did not "officially" do much to support her visit, said Maillard, noting however that the Embassy followed her visit closely and assisted as much as possible. In his view, Chinese leaders were aware of Royal's potential future in French government and treated her very well. Royal's meetings were general in nature, said Maillard, noting however that she did call for closer Chinese-French commercial ties and appealed to China to release jailed journalists and lawyers. According to western media, Royal said China should live up to global social standards and quickly ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and also discussed the environment and nuclear proliferation. "Both sides exchanged ideas on specific issues, including human rights" according to Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao, who added that both sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in order to address mutual concerns like the trade deficit.
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